

User Generated Content and Purchase Intention in Fast Food Consumption: Evidence from Consumers in Bengkulu City

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Abstract

User Generated Content (UGC) has become a dominant factor influencing consumer decision-making in the digital era, particularly within the fast-food industry. This study aims to analyze the effect of UGC on purchase intention among fast-food consumers in Bengkulu City. A quantitative approach was employed using survey data collected from consumers who actively engage with food-related content on social media. The data were analyzed using simple linear regression to test the proposed hypothesis. The findings indicate that UGC has a positive and significant effect on purchase intention. Consumers tend to trust authentic reviews, images, and experiences shared by other users, which reduces uncertainty and enhances buying interest. Visual and interactive content strengthens emotional engagement and increases consumer confidence. The study highlights the importance of encouraging customer participation in content creation to enhance marketing effectiveness and competitive advantage in the fast-food industry.

Keywords: User Generated Content, Purchase Intention, Fast Food, Digital Marketing, Consumer Behavior

INTRODUCTION

Digital transformation has provoked major changes in the patterns of marketing communication and processes of customer decision making (Butarbutar et al., 2026). The social media offers users a platform to share their experiences, evaluations and recommendations broadly, creating a dynamic and participatory digital environment (Nurbayan et al., 2025). In this setting, user-generated content (UGC) has developed as a marketing tool that significantly affects consumer views and buy inclinations (Purnama Sari et al., 2025). UGC is any content that is produced by customers rather than brands including product reviews, photographs, videos and user experience testimonials (Siregar et al., 2025). The content is more honest and authentic since it comes straight from the users' own experiences (Julsari et al., 2025). In the increasingly competitive and open-information-based digital era, UGC is more trusted than traditional advertising, leading to positive brand perceptions and increasing consumer engagement in the evaluation of products and services (Priani, 2025).

As more and more people buy food online and use apps to order, the fast-food business has become more competitive (Shandra et al., 2025). The circumstance has made the firms more flexible to the change in consumer behavior that is now more dependent on digital information prior to making purchase selections (Tambunan et al., 2025). In this respect, user-generated content (UGC) functions as electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM), which decreases consumers' risk perception and increases trust in the products and services offered (Amelia et al., 2025). Information provided by other users is considered more genuine and further affects consumers' confidence towards food choices (Tirtayasa et al., 2025). Visual content such as images of food and video reviews also have a high emotional appeal (Nasib et al., 2025). These visualizations can whet the appetite and establish a deeper emotional engagement hence having a substantial impact on the customer purchase intentions and behavior in an increasingly competitive, visual-experience driven digital ecosystem (Bhastary et al., 2025).

Further, social impact is significant in molding customer preferences. People often follow suggestions that are shared by others, particularly when the content is viewed as authentic, helpful and relevant to their requirements (Sinar et al., 2024). Interactive aspects on social media such as likes, comments, and shares help in expanding the reach of messages, thereby raising brand recognition faster and dramatically. Moreover, UGC has been found to contribute to the enhancement of brand trust and the perception of product value among consumers (Abidin & Ramli,



2025). In developing countries, such as Indonesia, the use of social media has increased significantly. Consumers actively use Instagram and TikTok as platforms to discover food trends and culinary references. Fast food goods are commonly promoted via user-generated content and have a viral marketing effect that can organically extend brand exposure (Cahayani & Santoso, 2025). However, the usefulness of UGC relies greatly on the quality of the content, the reliability of the source and the relevancy of the information delivered to the target audience.

Despite extensive research on digital marketing, empirical studies focusing on UGC and purchase intention in local fast-food contexts remain limited. Therefore, this study investigates the influence of UGC on purchase intention among consumers in Bengkulu City. This research contributes to digital marketing literature by providing empirical evidence and practical insights for businesses to optimize UGC strategies.

LITERATURE REVIEW

User Generated Content (UGC) has become a fundamental element in digital marketing communication. UGC refers to any form of content created and shared by consumers through digital platforms, including reviews, comments, photos, and videos related to products or services. Unlike firm-generated content, UGC is perceived as more authentic because it reflects real consumer experiences. Recent studies emphasize that consumers rely heavily on peer-generated information when evaluating products, particularly in online environments where direct product interaction is limited (Zannah, 2023). The increasing accessibility of social media platforms has amplified the influence of UGC in shaping consumer attitudes and behavioral intentions.

One of the primary factors that explains the effectiveness of UGC is credibility. Consumers tend to perceive content created by fellow users as unbiased and trustworthy. Research shows that UGC enhances perceived authenticity, which subsequently increases consumer trust (Sun et al., 2024). Trust plays a crucial role in reducing uncertainty, especially in digital purchasing environments where consumers cannot physically evaluate products. When users encounter positive reviews, testimonials, and recommendations, they develop confidence in the product and brand (Rodrigues et al., 2024). This mechanism is particularly relevant in the fast-food industry, where consumers often rely on visual and experiential cues before making purchase decisions.

In addition to credibility, UGC also contributes to information richness. User-generated content often provides detailed descriptions of product quality, price, service, and overall experience. This information helps consumers compare alternatives and evaluate potential benefits (Dore & Crouch, 2023). Informational UGC is particularly useful in high-involvement decision-making processes, where consumers seek multiple sources of information before making purchasing decisions. Moreover, the interactive nature of social media allows consumers to ask questions and receive immediate feedback, further enhancing decision-making efficiency (Varga & Albuquerque, 2024).

Emotional engagement is another important aspect of UGC. Visual content such as images and videos stimulates consumer emotions and influences attitudes toward products. In the fast-food context, food photography and video reviews can create appetite appeal and sensory attraction (Sarkis et al., 2025). Emotional responses triggered by visually appealing content often lead to positive brand perceptions and increased purchase intention. Studies suggest that emotional engagement mediates the relationship between UGC and consumer behavior, meaning that consumers who experience positive emotions are more likely to develop buying interest (Joy Onma Enyejo et al., 2024).

Social influence also plays a significant role in explaining the impact of UGC. Social media platforms facilitate peer interaction, allowing consumers to share opinions and experiences. This interaction creates social proof, which influences consumer preferences. When consumers observe others expressing positive experiences, they tend to follow similar behaviors (Maharani, 2023). This phenomenon is consistent with social influence theory, which states that individuals rely on group opinions when making decisions. In the fast-food industry, trends often spread rapidly through social media, making UGC a powerful driver of consumer behavior (Wijaya et al., 2025). Furthermore, UGC contributes to brand awareness and visibility. Content shared by users increases exposure to potential consumers. The viral nature of social media allows content to reach a broader audience

without significant marketing costs (Wells & Tan, 2024). High engagement levels, such as likes, comments, and shares, indicate popularity and influence consumer perceptions. Consumers often associate high engagement with product quality, which positively affects purchase intention (Resdiansyah & Pardede, 2024). Therefore, encouraging customers to create and share content can enhance brand recognition.

Purchase intention represents a consumer's likelihood to purchase a product based on attitudes and perceptions. It is considered an important predictor of actual buying behavior. In digital marketing contexts, purchase intention is influenced by cognitive and affective factors (Chaihanchai et al., 2024). Cognitive factors include product knowledge and perceived quality, while affective factors include emotions and brand attachment. UGC affects both dimensions by providing information and stimulating emotional responses (Thani & Thani, 2025). Another important factor linking UGC and purchase intention is perceived value. Consumers evaluate whether a product offers benefits relative to its cost. Positive UGC enhances perceived value by highlighting product advantages (Kathuria, 2023). For example, user reviews describing taste, convenience, and affordability of fast-food products can increase perceived value and encourage purchase intention. Conversely, negative UGC may reduce consumer confidence and discourage buying behavior.

Recent studies also emphasize the role of electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) as an extension of UGC. eWOM refers to online consumer communication regarding products or services. UGC often functions as eWOM because it influences other consumers' perceptions (Cheung et al., 2021). Positive eWOM increases brand trust and purchase intention, while negative eWOM can damage brand reputation. Therefore, managing UGC effectively is essential for businesses seeking to maintain positive brand image (Mittal et al., 2022). In the fast-food industry, UGC has become particularly influential due to the visual nature of food products. Consumers frequently share dining experiences through social media, creating organic promotional content. This content influences others' perceptions and encourages trial behavior. Visual UGC highlighting food presentation, portion size, and dining atmosphere plays a crucial role in shaping consumer preferences (Kartika & Pandjaitan, 2023). Additionally, time-limited promotions shared by users can create urgency, increasing purchase intention (Arianto et al., 2023).

Based on the theoretical perspectives discussed above, UGC can be considered a strategic marketing tool that influences consumer behavior. Credibility, emotional engagement, social influence, information richness, and perceived value collectively explain how UGC affects purchase intention. Understanding these relationships is essential for businesses seeking to enhance digital marketing effectiveness. Therefore, examining the influence of UGC on purchase intention provides valuable insights for both academic research and practical marketing strategies

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a quantitative research approach to examine the influence of User Generated Content (UGC) on Purchase Intention among fast-food consumers. A quantitative design was selected because it allows researchers to measure relationships between variables using statistical analysis and to test hypotheses objectively. Quantitative research is appropriate when the objective is to analyze causal relationships and generalize findings to a broader population. The study adopted a cross-sectional survey design, where data were collected at a single point in time to capture respondents' perceptions regarding UGC and their purchase intention. The population consisted of consumers who have purchased fast-food products and actively use social media. The sample was determined using purposive sampling, a non-probability sampling technique that selects respondents based on specific criteria relevant to the research objectives, namely individuals who are exposed to user-generated content related to fast-food products.

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire distributed to respondents. The questionnaire measured two main variables: User Generated Content and Purchase Intention. The UGC variable was measured through indicators such as credibility, informativeness, relevance, and attractiveness of content, while Purchase Intention was measured using indicators including willingness to purchase, likelihood of trying products, and intention to recommend. All measurement

items were assessed using a five-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. The Likert scale is widely used in consumer behavior research because it effectively measures attitudes and perceptions. Prior to hypothesis testing, the instrument was evaluated through validity and reliability testing. Validity testing was conducted using Pearson correlation to ensure that each item accurately measured the intended construct, while reliability testing used Cronbach's Alpha to evaluate internal consistency of the measurement scale.

Data analysis was performed using both descriptive and inferential statistical techniques. Descriptive analysis was used to present respondent characteristics and variable distributions, whereas inferential analysis was conducted using simple linear regression to examine the effect of User Generated Content on Purchase Intention. Regression analysis is appropriate for testing causal relationships between independent and dependent variables. The regression model used in this study is expressed as Purchase Intention is $Y = a + bX$, where a represents the constant, b represents the regression coefficient, and ϵ represents the error term. Hypothesis testing was conducted using the t-test to determine the significance of the relationship, while the coefficient of determination (R^2) was calculated to measure the proportion of variance in Purchase Intention explained by User Generated Content. This methodological approach provides empirical evidence regarding the influence of UGC on consumer purchase intention in the fast-food industry.

RESULTS and DISCUSSION

The results of this study indicate that User Generated Content (UGC) has a positive and significant effect on Purchase Intention among fast-food consumers. The regression analysis demonstrates that UGC contributes meaningfully to explaining variations in consumers' willingness to purchase fast-food products. Respondents reported that exposure to reviews, comments, and visual content shared by other users increased their confidence in evaluating product quality. This finding suggests that consumer-generated information functions as a reliable reference during decision-making processes. Empirical evidence shows that consumers tend to rely on peer-generated information because it is perceived as more transparent and reflective of real experiences (Yulinda et al., 2025). Consequently, UGC strengthens consumer perceptions and encourages favorable behavioral intentions.

Furthermore, the findings reveal that the credibility of UGC plays an important role in influencing purchase intention. Respondents indicated that authentic reviews and user experiences reduce uncertainty when choosing fast-food products. This aligns with previous research highlighting that credible online content reduces perceived risk and improves consumer trust (Hermawan & Arianto, 2025). In the fast-food context, where consumers cannot evaluate taste prior to purchase, trust becomes a critical factor. Positive UGC provides reassurance regarding product quality, service speed, and overall experience. As trust increases, consumers become more willing to try the product, which ultimately enhances purchase intention.

The results also demonstrate that visual UGC significantly influences consumer interest. Images and videos shared by users create sensory appeal that stimulates appetite and curiosity. Visual representation of food presentation, portion size, and dining atmosphere contributes to positive perceptions. Studies confirm that visually appealing UGC increases emotional engagement and encourages consumers to form purchase intention (Cantika & Arianto, 2024). Emotional engagement is particularly relevant in the fast-food industry, where impulsive buying behavior often occurs. When consumers encounter attractive food images, they tend to develop spontaneous desire to purchase the product.

In addition, social interaction within digital platforms amplifies the effect of UGC. Respondents stated that comments, likes, and shares enhance content visibility and signal product popularity. High engagement levels indicate that a product is widely accepted by other consumers. This social validation influences individual decision-making and encourages trial behavior. Prior studies emphasize that social interaction strengthens consumer confidence and increases purchase intention through peer influence mechanisms (Dea et al., 2025). Therefore, UGC not only provides information but also creates a social environment that shapes consumer preferences.

The coefficient of determination indicates that UGC explains a substantial proportion of variance in purchase intention, although other factors may also influence consumer decisions. These findings suggest that businesses should actively encourage customers to generate and share content. Strategies such as hashtag campaigns, customer reviews, and interactive promotions can increase UGC exposure. Research supports that active consumer participation enhances marketing effectiveness and brand engagement (Muntinga et al., 2021). By leveraging UGC, fast-food businesses can improve visibility and attract potential customers.

Overall, the results confirm that User Generated Content significantly influences purchase intention through credibility, emotional engagement, and social interaction. The findings provide empirical support for the role of UGC as a strategic marketing tool in the fast-food industry. Encouraging customers to share authentic experiences can strengthen consumer trust, increase engagement, and ultimately drive purchasing behavior.

The findings of this study indicate that User Generated Content (UGC) has a positive and significant effect on purchase intention among fast-food consumers. This result suggests that information shared by consumers through digital platforms plays an important role in shaping purchasing decisions. Reviews, comments, and visual content enable potential consumers to evaluate product quality before making a purchase, particularly in digital environments where direct product experience is limited. Consumers tend to rely on peer-generated information because it is perceived as more authentic and trustworthy than traditional promotional messages. This credibility enhances consumer trust, which becomes a key determinant in forming purchase intention. Furthermore, visual content such as images and videos shared by users stimulates emotional engagement and creates appetite appeal. Emotional responses generated by attractive food presentation encourage spontaneous buying interest, indicating that UGC provides both informational and emotional value in influencing consumer behavior.

In addition, social interaction within digital platforms amplifies the impact of UGC on purchase intention. Features such as likes, comments, and shares increase content visibility and signal product popularity, creating social proof that influences individual decision-making. When consumers observe positive experiences shared by others, they tend to follow similar behavior, which reduces perceived risk and strengthens confidence in the product. These findings confirm that UGC creates a supportive social environment that shapes consumer perceptions and preferences. Overall, credibility, emotional engagement, and social interaction collectively explain how UGC influences purchase intention. Therefore, fast-food businesses should encourage customers to share authentic experiences through reviews, photos, and testimonials to enhance trust, increase engagement, and ultimately improve consumers' willingness to purchase.

CONCLUSION

This study aimed to examine the influence of User Generated Content (UGC) on Purchase Intention among fast-food consumers. The findings indicate that UGC has a positive and significant effect on consumers' intention to purchase fast-food products. Content created by users, such as reviews, comments, photos, and videos, provides credible and relevant information that helps consumers evaluate products before making purchasing decisions. As a result, UGC reduces uncertainty and increases consumer confidence, which ultimately strengthens purchase intention.

Based on the findings of this study, fast-food businesses are encouraged to actively utilize User Generated Content (UGC) as part of their digital marketing strategy. Companies should motivate customers to share their experiences through reviews, photos, and videos on social media platforms by creating interactive campaigns such as hashtag challenges, customer review programs, and incentives for posting authentic content. Encouraging consumers to generate content can increase brand visibility, enhance credibility, and create positive social proof that influences potential customers. In addition, businesses should actively monitor and manage UGC by responding to comments, engaging with users, and resharing high-quality content to strengthen consumer trust and interaction. Fast-food companies are also advised to collaborate with loyal customers to produce authentic testimonials that reflect real experiences. For future research, it is recommended to include additional variables such as brand trust, perceived value, and electronic word-of-mouth, as well as

expand the research scope to different industries and larger sample sizes to improve the generalizability of findings.

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